

Joshua 1:9 “Be Strong and Courageous”

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"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Where we are today is a time in history. It's where God has placed us. The blessings that God has given us bear responsibilities from each of us. We are part of God's plan. We can't go backwards. The Lord has instructed us in the Bible to read, study, and meditate on His word. However, it's not always how much time we spend in the word that matters. It's how we apply His word into our thoughts, feelings, conduct and actions that really matters. The Lord expects us to show kindness and benevolence to our fellow man out of love. The Bible tells us that Jesus "though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor." (2 Cor. 8:9). God's indescribable gift to us in Jesus Christ should create a generosity in each of us to want to give to others. If not, we need to do a heart check.

God has given us many blessings for us to share with those less fortunate, especially in the work of the gospel and in helping those in the body of Christ. For many Christians this may include suffering for the Lord and for the Gospel. According to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, in the early 21st century, it is estimated that 1 million Christians were killed over the 10-year period from 2000–2010, an average of approximately 100,000 Christians killed each year.

The history we are living in today broadcasts the killings of innocent Christians by violent Islamic extremists in the Middle East and Africa. And, if any of our brothers and sisters in Christ suffer then we all suffer. As the scripture says we are all one body in Christ. (Rom. 12: 4-5) The Lord commands us to love our neighbors and to pray for our enemies. This is easy to say but sometimes hard to accept and to do. But, it is what Jesus told us to do. We need to look at our enemies knowing that the real enemies are spiritual. It's the devil behind the scenes; therefore, we should recognize that behind our flesh and blood enemies ultimately Satan is at work. This does not give evil people a pass. We still need justice in this world as God's instruments. But, Jesus wants us to love our enemies even to or on the cross. They will know we are Christians by our love. We love him because he first loved us. He died so that we will live. He died that we could share his love to others. We are not to hide it or let it lie dormant. We are to let his light shine through us. We are to leave life more abundantly and to be God's fellow workers in his field. We don't know what our actions will bring. We could be planting seeds for others to water and grow. What matters is our obedience to serving Him and in helping others. To do His will that is what he did. Jesus tells us in the scriptures that "if they persecuted me that will persecute you." (JN 15:18-21) It is to be expected. It's up to each of us to pick up our cross daily and to decide whether or not to pursue Him and to bring comfort and love to others.

Let's continue to pray for the Persecuted Christians in the Middle East and Africa. That God would give faith, hope, courage, and strength to those under persecution. That even under persecution they would be strong and courageous. Let's also pray that God would bring the persecutors to justice in the physical world and spiritually that He would melt the hearts of the Persecutors and remove their blindness and be open to the gospel of Jesus Christ.